Keeping in Touch

September 1997

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

UFMCC General Conference XVIII: Making History... Charting the Future!

The UFMCC made history during July as General Conference XVIII became the largest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered spirituality gathering ever held in the Pacific Rim.

From the Opening Rally with more than 1600 in attendance, there was a feeling of excitement and history in the air! Delegates and attendees gathered from 15 countries for an inspiring week of worship, workshops and business.

A highlight of conference business was the election of elders. The Rev. Darlene Garner and the Rev. Hong Tan were re-elected as elders. On a subsequent ballot, Mr. Clarke Friesen was elected to the board (see box on page 2). Delegates did not reach consensus on the final position. Under UFMCC by-laws, the Board of Elders will appoint the final position, which will be affirmed by General Council in October.

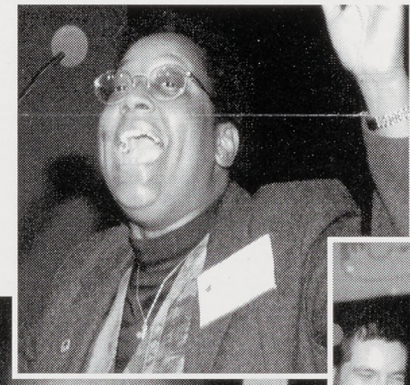
In an exciting move for UFMCC, delegates approved new mission, vision and core values statements. These new documents provide a positive framework in which UFMCC will do ministry. Delegates also adopted the new Ministry Priorities, which will form the basis of UFMCC's new budgeting process. In other business, delegates rejected a proposal to hold General Conference every three years.

Conference organizer Nathan Meckley and UFMCC Director of Administration Ravi Verma expressed the Fellowship's appreciation to the Australian churches for their hospitality, planning and organization. "The Australians have provided an outstanding example of intercultural work and ministry which will serve as a model for UFMCC for many years to come. We are deeply thankful to our Australian hosts for their exemplary work in preparing and hosting General Conference."

Dr. Chung Hyun Kyung: Key Ingredient To Successful Conference!

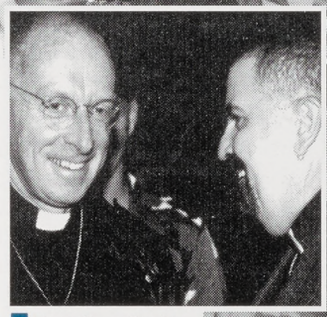
Rev. Sandra Robinson

General Conference Eighteen in Sydney, Australia was, in this writer's opinion, the best General Conference in Fellowship history. One of the ingredients to this success was Dr. Chung Hyun Kyung. Dr. Chung, Professor of Ecumenics at Union



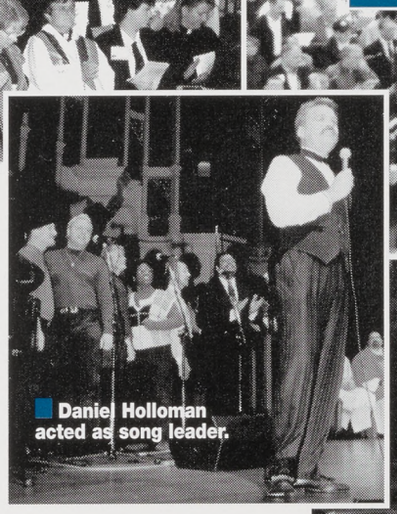
Would it be conference without the joyful song leading of Rev. Carolyn Mobley, left? Below, retiring Elder Larry Rodriguez is honored for his years of service. But who's happier, Larry or his spouse, Case?

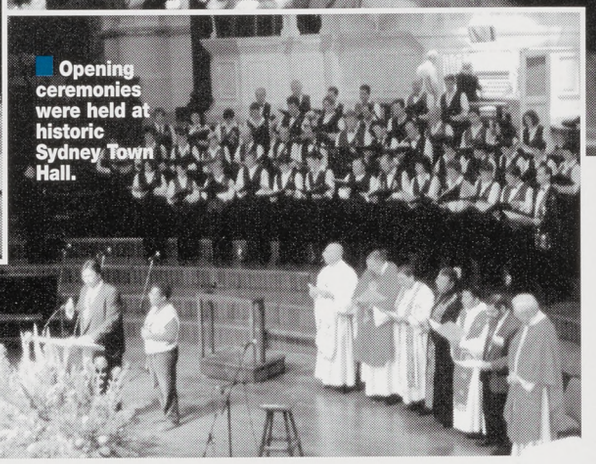
Above, conference erupts in one of its many joyful moments during the week.



Rev. Greg Smith, pastor of MCC Sydney, and Rev. Elder Troy Perry, above, share a private moment.

A highlight of the week was Conference Choir.


Daniel Holloman acted as song leader.


Opening ceremonies were held at historic Sydney Town Hall.

Theological Seminary, is the author of *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*.

Dr. Chung was the conference keynote speaker, presenting "Love in the time of AIDS: Reflections on a New Civilization which Empowers our Resistance, Liberation, and Healing for the 21st Century." She also facilitated workshops entitled, "Asian Eco-Feminist Ta Chi: Eventually Beauty will Save Us All" and "Asian Approach to Healing and Health".

Monday evening the conference was given a spiritual gift during Dr. Chung's sermon. It was a refreshing and startling conversation which

intimately unfolded her personal journey of spirituality and sexual consciousness. We were given a trust-filled glimpse at how theology develops within a soul-seeking truth guided by the culture of her ancestors and deep faith.

Those of us who were present during Dr. Chung's 1991 keynote address at the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Canberra, Australia, were reminded again of the power of her faith which challenges traditional status quo Christianity. She spoke to the theme of the General Assembly, "Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation," admonishing the Christian Church to notice and then hear how the Holy Spirit moves and acts within and through people and culture ... this being the only answer to true repentance.

Dr. Chung's theological questioning "comes from [her] anger and hope as a Third World woman who refuses to be victimized by any kind of colonialism." Her theology "is also inspired by [her] burning desire for self-determination and it originates from a liberation oriented, Third World interpretation of people's history."

During her keynote to the Universal Fellowship she urged us to prepare for the events of a rapidly changing world through continuous "social analysis." She regards the UFMCC as perhaps the most important religious movement as the world approaches the new millennium. She recalled and returned us to our roots, the special revelation given to us by God 29 years ago, that God loves all people including our sexual selves. She believes that living a healthy and life-promoting understanding of spirituality and sexuality is the nature of this special revelation. She named us the "prophets of love" and urged us to freely and joyfully be prophetic into the 21st century.

Technology Enhances General Conference XVIII!

Rev. David Farrell

The statistics are staggering! 86,199 hits on the World Center website (www.ufmcc.com) during month of July 1997! 38,249 hits on Virtual General Conference website during conference week! 3,500 people hear Opening Address over the Internet! Six Internet chat sessions bring conference discussions home to MCCers! 150 attend conference technology workshop "The Church Online!"

It happened! For the first time, computers and the Internet brought General Conference "home" to thousands of MCCers all over the world. The statistics listed above are only a partial measure of the impact of UFMCC's use of new information technologies in the presentation of General Conference XVIII ... the real story is the inclusion and participation of thousands of MCCers who were "present" in a new way in Sydney, Australia.

People from 52 countries began visiting the Virtual General Conference Center on the World Center website. Day after day, the counter went up as people checked in to see and hear the latest news, election results and photos of conference activities. By week's end, 38,249 hits had been recorded on the Virtual Center, boosting the monthly website total to an all-time high of 86,199 hits in July!

Meet Newly Elected Elder Clarke Friesen

As the only lay person currently on the Board of Elders, Clarke Friesen brings a wealth of UFMCC experience to the position. Mennonite by background, Clarke is currently a member of Water of Life MCC in Tucson, AZ. He previously spent more than 22 years as an active member of MCC of the Resurrection in Houston, TX, where he served in many leadership positions, and is a former UFMCC District Coordinator for the South Central District.

Prior to his election, Clarke noted, "I hold a vision of UFMCC as a church that places priority on the evangelical message of Jesus Christ, a church that continues to break down all barriers, a church on the cutting edge theologically, a church international, a church that works in the greater community to promote issues of justice.

"I believe that our structures must be focused on equipping the local churches for effective and powerful ministry in their communities. I believe all actions, decisions, proposals and programs must be evaluated with the question, 'How will this benefit or support the local church?'"

He also noted, "I applaud our move to utilize new technology. I envision utilizing technological advances to work smarter and be even more effective in sharing the message God has entrusted to us to build the church for the 21st century."

Perry Receives White House Invitation

As this issue of *Keeping In Touch* was going to press, the Rev. Elder Troy Perry received an invitation from U.S. President Bill Clinton to participate in the November White House Conference on Hate Crimes.

The White House Conference will explore federal options for dealing with hate crimes based on religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. More than 20 UFMCC congregations have been victimized by arson or bombings, noted Perry.

"UFMCC is unique in American society for having been targeted for hate crimes both on the basis of our religious beliefs and because of sexual orientation," Perry added.

"Proportionally, no other institution in America has been the recipient of arson, bombing, vandalism and desecration motivated by hate crimes as have the churches of UFMCC. I welcome an opportunity to make our voice heard at this national conference and to call for implementation of an expanded federal hate crimes law."

On Monday, July 20th, MCC members, friends and website visitors began listening to the Internet webcast of Rev. Perry's Opening Address to the General Conference in Sydney. In addition to the gathering of delegates and observers at the Darling Harbour Convention Center, more than 3,500 people have listened to the address over the Internet, by accessing www.ufmcc.com or the GloRadio website!

At regular intervals during the week, MCCers and cyber-visitors gathered around their computers to participate in a series of six chat sessions (a total of 12 hours!) on America Online and the Worldwide Web. Discussion topics ranging from daily conference business to elders' election results, these MCCers were part of the action at General Conference XVIII.

The Technology Workshop on Friday afternoon: "The Church Online; Evangelizing the World; All Together...All at Once...All the Time!" drew more than 150 interested attendees eager to learn how to use the latest information technologies to grow the ministry of their local churches. Those present learned to use the World Center website as a conduit for late-breaking Fellowship news and as a resource center for many UFMCC materials. In addition, attendees were told how every MCC can have a beautiful and effective webpage on the Internet free of charge!

Computer technology also enhanced workshops, business meetings and worship activities during the conference. A huge round of applause is due to our excellent conference staff and volunteers who provided support services and much appreciated encouragement during a busy, hectic week. Thanks are also due to Mark Hahn, Sparkle Clark, Beverly Mitzel for the workshop and the Chats, and the many volunteers who provided info and photos throughout the week.

And especially to the MCCs who held virtual General Conference parties to provide computer access to their members, and to all of the MCCers and cyber-travelers whose enthusiastic participation made UFMCC's first adventure in cyberspace a big success. Thank you and God bless you!

Perry, Tutu to Meet in December

The Rev. Elder Troy Perry will meet with human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu in Capetown, South Africa on December 10, 1997, it was announced this week. Perry and Tutu will discuss the growth of UFMCC in South Africa and review international human rights activities.

UFMCC played an instrumental role in adding broad legal protection for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities to the South African Constitution. Perry will conduct a preaching tour of South African UFMCC congregations December 1-15. According to the UFMCC Elders Report, some of UFMCC's greatest international growth is currently occurring in South Africa.

■ **More diverse than any in the past, General conference attracted delegates and participants from 15 countries.**

■ **Spanish-speaking participants joined Larry Rodriguez after his last sermon as Elder.**

A Fellowship of **Activity**

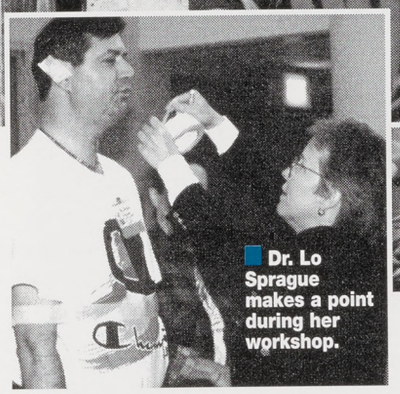
Wonderful praise and thank you goes to the **Sydney Organizing Site Committee** for all their work and preparation for a grand and glorious General Conference XVIII. This Committee consisted of the following very talented individuals: Rev. Robert Clark, Rev. Greg Smith, Rev. Cliff Conners, Mr. Bruce Gray, Ms. Shelagh Zincke, and Mr. Paul Truscott. ■ Special thanks also to the **District Committee** and the **District of Australia** and the committed churches, clergy and members who have worked tirelessly to assure the success of General Conference in Australia. ■ Congratulations to Ms. Beryl Quennell, District Lay Coordinator for the **European District** who was re-elected as assistant chair of the UFMCC Commission on the Laity. ■ Rev. Paul Whiting has been elected as the new pastor of **MCC in Gainesville**, Florida. ■ Congratulations to Mr. Richard Waugh, St. Petersburg, Florida, the winner of a giant Koala, during a fundraiser at General Conference in Australia. ■ Rev. John Hankins, **All Saints MCC**, Atlanta, Georgia, conducted a commitment ceremony for nearly a hundred couples at Atlanta's Pride celebration in June. ■ MCC at the U.S. National Cathedral? You bet! The **MCC Washington**, DC, Gospel Choir was the featured performer at the Cathedral Summer Concert event in June. Between 800 - 1,000 people enjoyed what was an amazing Spirit-filled musical event. The Washington Post headline said it all: "An Electric Gospel Choir." ■ **MCC of the Rainbow**, Jackson, Mississippi, sponsored Legal Assistance Day in Jackson for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered persons in cooperation with the ACLU in June. ■ Praise God - **Samaritan Institute** is offering "Understanding the Bible, Part II (New Testament)" in Pretoria, South Africa. Rev. Sue Welman, pastor of Deo Gloria Family Church MCC, has been named faculty. ■ **Harvest MCC**, Denton, Texas received the South Central District Excellence in Ministry Award at their May District Conference. The award read: "presented to Harvest MCC for your faithfulness to the vision of the UFMCC in the face of opposition from the City of Corinth." ■ Rev. Marcie Wexler will begin her ministry as the new pastor of **Holy Fellowship MCC**,

Continued

One-Day Church Growth Mini-Conference Announced

How do people find your church? Why do they stay, and when do they leave? These questions will be answered during the Church Growth Mini-Conference to be held in West Hollywood, CA on Friday, Nov. 7 as part of the Southwest District Conference. Six one-hour sessions will discuss contemporary trends and personal reasons people choose a local church, and why they stay. From creative outreach to user-friendly worship, and effective visitor follow-up to mobilizing members for ministry, workshop participants will discover new skills and resources for church growth. Facilitators for this one-day mini-conference will be the Rev. Elder Don Eastman and James Birkitt, UFMCC Director of Communications. Registration information is available through the Southwest District Office at (805) 483-5424.

The snack area always becomes a meeting place ...



Dr. Lo Sprague makes a point during her workshop.

Striving for perfection in Conference music.

Conference in Motion!

Rev. Judy Davenport found convenient motion assistance. Is that an electric dolphin?

In Touch with Samaritan

The President, Dean and four Trustees of Samaritan Institute for Religious Studies attended General Conference in Sydney, Australia. The Conference was filled with exciting possibilities and opportunities for networking, learning, teaching and meeting new people.

It was an important opportunity for the alumni of the Polity/Practics class of 1992 and the class of 1996 to gather, meet with the Dean and catch up with each other's lives while raising toasts to successful ministries.

Rev. Sue Welman and her partner Diane, were invited to meet with the President and Dean during a reception hosted by Darlene Stilles and Cynthia Marquard, President of Envoy Travel. We discussed academic and leadership training possibilities while learning about their vital ministry in South Africa.

Dr. West presented a workshop: "Eunuchs, Euphemisms and the Politics of Biblical Interpretation"a very successful workshop attended by 115 people; and facilitated "Doing Yourself Justice: Reconnecting Personal Power for Effective Leadership in Ministry" with the Director of Clergy Development, Rev. Justin Tannis and the Administrator for Global Outreach, Rev. Judy Dahl.

Rev. Reid L. Christensen

On Friday, August 1 at 11:45 PM, the Rev. Reid L. Christensen, Pastor Emeritus of First MCC Atlanta, went home to be with the Lord after an extended bout with cancer. Dr. John Moore, his loving companion of 21 years, was at his bedside.

Please continue to uphold John in your prayers, as well as the congregation at First MCC Atlanta. Phone calls of condolence should go through the church office at (404) 325-4143.

A Memorial Service for the Rev. Reid Christensen was held at First MCC Atlanta on Saturday, August 30.

New UFMCC Resource Center Catalog Published

Looking for worship resources? HIV/AIDS ministry materials? Children's programming ideas? Ways to reach and keep new members? Ideas for integrating spirituality and sexuality? Fund raising ideas? Then you'll want a copy of the new UFMCC Resource Center Catalog.

This catalog lists more than 140 books, pamphlets and resources available through the UFMCC Resource Center! For your free copy, write UFMCC Headquarters, or send an e-mail request to UFMCCHQ@aol.com.

Houston MCC Event Draws 2100 Persons

Congratulations to the choirs of MCC of the Resurrection (Houston, TX) and MCC Knoxville (TN) who recently teamed up to present a spectacular reminder of God's unconditional love through the musical, "We Are One!"

Thanks to the hard work of more than 300 volunteers from MCC of the Resurrection, and the dynamic leadership of the Rev. Dwayne Johnson, senior pastor of MCC-R, 2100 persons filled the majestic Houston Music Hall for this unique and moving event. Many of those attending commented on the number of children and families in attendance. Congratulations to all involved for this successful outreach to the community.

Tips for Better Printed Material

Rev. Justin Tanis

Looking for ways to make your brochures, flyers and bulletins a little more exciting? Check out pre-printed specialty papers that have a color design already printed on the page. You just

■ **Left, Frank Zerilli and Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson taking a break from business meetings.**

print or copy your text onto the paper. You can find pre-printed paper at stationery and office supply stores or order one of these catalogs:

Paper Direct, 1-800-A-PAPERS: Many colorful and professional styles of paper for everything from flyers, brochures, business cards, name tags, newsletters and folders. Paper Direct also sells software to help with lay-out of quality looking pieces.

Baudville Desktop Publishing Solutions, 1-800-728-0888 or www.baudville.com. Baudville offers contemporary images, including some motivational images. In addition to flyers, awards and brochures, they offer bi-fold designer papers, for traditional style bulletins and ASpeedy Bulletin@ software.

Ramco Paper Supplies, 1-800-522-6922 offers specialty papers in banner lengths and papers that allow you to create heat-transfer t-shirts.

NEBS small business resources, http://nebswww.nebs.com/nebs, International Offices, 011-44-1244-390-222

Esselte papers, http://ww.esselte.com (Australia +61-(0)2-616 70 99, Denmark +45-38-16 78 00, France +33-(0)1-44 85 17 00, Germany +49-(0)511-95 950, the UK +44-(0)1954-78 04 36)

The Marriage Battle Has Just Begun: Now Is Our Time To Act

Our founder, the Rev. Elder Troy Perry and the Elders of our Fellowship have made it clear. The same-gender marriage issue is a justice issue about which we dare not remain silent, inactive, and on the sidelines. It is time again for UFMCC congregations to speak and act with courage and with creativity.

The following compilation of resources from the National Freedom to Marry Coalition is intended to help every UFMCC congregation to develop your own strategy to help win justice for God's lesbian and gay children. The religious and political extremists are committing huge resources in their campaign to deny us our rights to marriage. We must redouble our efforts to win those rights and protections and to enlist gay and non-gay support for our freedom to marry.

JUSTICE

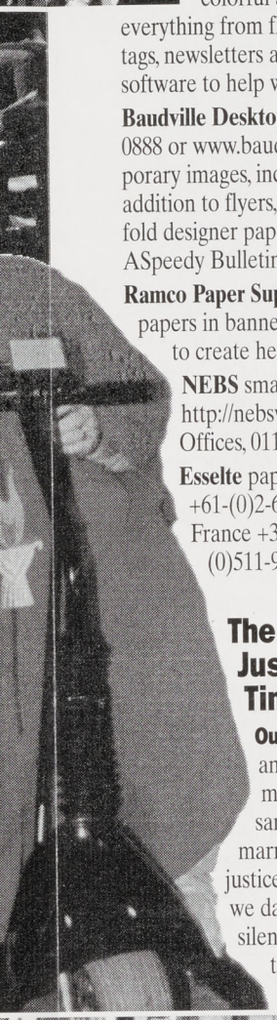
Rev. Mel White
Minister of Justice

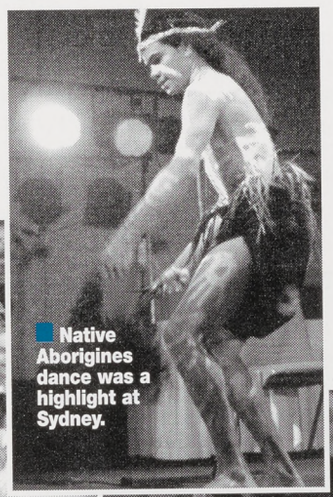
The National Freedom to Marry Coalition includes every national lesbian and gay rights organization including our Universal Fellowship, numerous non-gay allies, and state and local partners in every state --- all working together to secure the freedom to marry free of sex discrimination.

I invite you and your congregation to join the Coalition in the tasks before us: (1) beating back the radical right anti-marriage backlash bills in state legislatures across the country; (2) defeating anti-marriage ballot measures in Hawaii and elsewhere; and (3) in every community, affirmatively enlisting non-gay supporters and reaching out to the non-gay persuadable public, engaging people in dialogue about our freedom to marry, inviting support for the Marriage Resolution, and shaping the climate of receptivity for the couples soon to be legally married.

Here is a vast array of resources, available (mostly free) from Coalition members, or from Lambda's Marriage Project (the Coalition clearinghouse). Please get what you need (contact information follows for each group). We strongly urge people to use September, October, November, and December as a time to hold forums, engage in dialogue, shape media, make contacts with reachable non-gay political supporters, and ask for discussion and support of the Marriage Resolution. This is a precious window of opportunity. These resources are available for you to use in creating and fulfilling your local action plan.

The following materials are available through Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund's Marriage Project, 120





■ **Native Aborigines dance was a highlight at Sydney.**

■ **UFMCC invades the waterfront for a harbor cruise.**

■ **Dr. Chung leads women in "Eco-Feminist Tai Chi."**

A Fellowship of **Activity**

Continued

London, Ontario, Canada in August. Congratulations! ■ The 1997 Austin Out'n Open Golf Tournament will take place in Austin, Texas the weekend of October 10-12, 1997. For information contact Linda Pierson (512) 708-0536 or Fax (512) 708- 8992.

PRAYERS

Please keep the family and friends of **Rev. Linda Laster**, pastor of Emmanual MCC in Spokane, Washington in prayer as Linda passed away on July 29. Please uphold her partner, Marge Johnson, with your love and prayers. ■ Please keep the family and friends of **Rev. Ken Taylor**, one of the early pastors of MCC London, in your prayers as Ken passed away in Manchester, England in July. ■ **Rev. Edward Knisley**, pastor of Lamb of God MCC, Anchorage, Alaska, has moved to New York to study at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. Prayers for him and the Alaska congregation he is leaving. ■ Prayers for friends and family of **Anthony Crayton**, long-time member and friend of Vieux Carre' MCC, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who passed away on July 12th due to complications with HIV. ■ Prayers for the **Rev. Lee Carlton**, who's mother recently passed away after a battle with cancer.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES/EVENTS

■ Sept. 18-21 **MCC Toronto Church Growth Conference and Eastern Canadian District Conference** - Toronto, Ontario

■ Sept. 20-21 **Excel International All Team Gathering**, Jacksonville, Florida

■ Oct. 15-20 **Board of Elders, General Council Meeting**, Los Angeles, CA

■ Oct. 24-26 **Excel of the Armadillo**, Dickinson, Texas

■ Nov. 7 **Church Growth Mini-Conference**, West Hollywood, CA Theme: "Front Door, Back Door, Side Door." Six one-hour sessions facilitated by the Rev. Elder Don Eastman and James Birkitt, UFMCC Director of Communications

■ Nov. 7-9 **Southwest District Conference**, West Hollywood, CA Theme: "A Glorious Witness." Call the district office at (805) 483-5424 for information.

Gay Theological Journal

Homosexual Hermeneutics on Religion and the Scriptures

Covers the entire spectrum of spiritual issues confronting Gays and Lesbians. Along with insightful features, the Journal includes commentary, religious news, resources, reviews and listings of inclusive, affirming congregations. Subscriptions are $20/year (individuals) and $30/year (institutions).

To subscribe, contact the Journal at P. O. Box 1129, Manassas, VA 20110. Call toll-free for Visa and MasterCard orders: 1-800-215-1881

Conference is a time to re-connect with old friends.

Two poster kids for "Conference is Fun!"

Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10011, 212-809-8585 (voice), 212-809-0055 (fax), or lldefmarry@aol.com. Many of Lambda Legal's materials are available through their website: http:\\www.freedom-tomarry.org.

Materials Available Include: **1. Marriage Information Packets** - Information on the marriage fight and tools for discussing the issue of marriage with others. Packets also address the perspectives of religious communities and people of color. (Also in Spanish.) **2. Freedom to Marry Brochure** - The Marriage Resolution, basic Questions & Answers, and talking points. Circulate as widely as possible. **3. Resolution and Signatories** - List of national and local organizations, religious leaders, and congregations signing on to the Marriage Resolution.

4. Interracial Marriage/History - Including summary of the parallels between the anti-marriage laws aimed at same-sex couples, and the prohibitions against interracial marriage from a generation ago; *You Must Come Out to Fight for Marriage and More*, by Lambda attorney Kim Kirkley, urges people to view marriage in the larger context of an ongoing civil rights struggle that includes Brown v. Board of Education and Loving v. Virginia.

5. Bibliography - list of articles (legal and popular) in the areas of marriage, national recognition of marriages performed in Hawaii, recognition of same-sex couples in other countries. **6. Articles** - including various press clippings; "Conservative Case" articles - selected clippings putting forth the "conservative case" for equal marriage rights. **7. Press Kit** - contains general legal, historical and social backgrounders on the freedom to marry for same-sex couples, as well as press clippings. Photographs are also available, upon request.

Global Outreach Participants Respond to Conference

GLOBAL UFMCC

Rev. Judy Dahl, Global Outreach

Maria Luisa Barrientos Cui (MaLu) Lay Delegate of MCC Manila , in the Philippines, writes: "In the conference I really learned a lot. From all the workshops I attended and from the different kinds of worship. For me, this is the greatest achievement in life and a giant step for our congregation to grow and to develop. I am excited to go home to my homeland and to my church, MCC Manila, to share with them what I have learned from conference. My vision for MCC Manila is that it will last forever. MCC Manila really changes me a lot. Not only my mind but also, spiritually. It really changes my life. We are thanking you for all your prayers and support to us. Bless your spirits and hearts! And thank you so much, God, for giving us the MCC, our founder Rev. Troy Perry, for his undying goodness to us. We love you so much! I love you and thank you so much."

Andrew Hills, Lay Delegate of The Reforming Church MCC, Pretoria, South Africa writes: "In a total state of awe, I would like to share with you some of my impressions of the conference. I came to Sydney about 3 weeks ago, not quite knowing what to expect. Within a day I found myself in the midst of God's people when I attended the anniversary dinner of MCC Sydney. It really felt like being at home. While talking to what should have been total strangers, I had an intense experience of being in the spiritual home of our own congregation. The constant current of God's grace moves without fail from one person to another. What a joy to be a part of that constantly moving beam of light! The authentic experience of God's caring love and the inspirational force of the Spirit exercised my wings for a spiritual flight that wasn't possible, even in my wildest dreams."

Planning New Ministries This Fall?

Don't forget the Kids!

Building a Great Children's Ministry
BP0071
$9.50

The Family Story Bible
BP9720
$17.00

Boredom Busting Ideas to Involve Children in Adult Worship
BP9701
$11.00

Children's Sermons for the Revised Common Lectionary: Using the Five Senses to Tell God's Story
Year A BP9726
Year B BP9711
Year C BP9712
$8.00 each

Quick Children's Sermons: Will My Dog Be in Heaven?
BP9703
$10.00

Free Resource Center Catalog
AD0002

Call (310) 360-8640 or fax orders to (310) 360-8680
for shipping and tax information
The UFMCC Resource Center "Equipping the Church for the work of the ministry in the 21st Century"

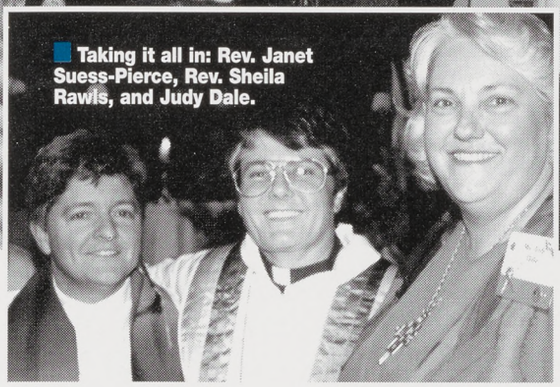
Would you like your church newsletter to look as good as *Keeping in Touch*? The Internet makes it more affordable than you might think!

WordShapes

Norm Mason
213/413-6009
fax 213/413-2682
WordShapes@aol.com

Inset: Conference Organizer Nathan Meckley, left, and Director of Administration Ravi Verma.

Rev. Steve Pieters was honored for his many years of AIDS ministry.



Taking it all in: Rev. Janet Suess-Pierce, Rev. Sheila Rawls, and Judy Dale.

Resource Center became a busy meeting place in Sydney.

Hi, my name is Tess Smith. I'm a lesbian and proud. My heart was captured by that one article I have read in "Keeping In Touch," July edition. It's about the gay and lesbian Pride Parade in the Philippines. I was just really shocked and couldn't believe what I was reading about MCC Manila. I was born and raised in the Philippines. I spent 19 long years of my life there, and I never knew the gay and lesbian community existed. I want to congratulate my strong and proud Filipinos for doing such a great job, "I'm very proud of you..." From now on I will always put MCC Manila in my prayers, and all the MCC's around the world. I hope the next time you have a gay and lesbian Pride Parade, my partner Julie and I will be there to show the world that we're gay, we're proud and we're happy.

HIV/AIDS Issues at Conference

General Conference XVIII offered a number of opportunities to deal with HIV/AIDS issues. A daily lunchtime support group, workshops, a rest area, and informal networking and support work took place during the Conference, with our Australian hosts providing a great deal of help and support to all of us living with HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS

Rev. Steve Pieters
Director HIV/AIDS Ministry

About forty people attended "Is AIDS A Dead Issue? UFMCC's Response...What's Next?" Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson led an open discussion on AIDS ministry on a local and denominational level. She invited participants to share what they wanted the Elders to hear. There was general agreement that while AIDS ministries are confronting changing needs, it is still vitally important to care for those who cannot benefit from new treatments, as well as to confront justice issues. A number of people expressed a strong need for AIDS ministry on the denominational level. Quite a few demonstrated hunger for models of HIV/AIDS ministry on the local level. A number of books on the subject were available at the Resource Table.

Over 30 men attended "Men Talking Sex," a workshop to facilitate HIV prevention. I introduced a new four-week prevention program for gay men in local churches. Workshop participants had fun "voting with their bodies" on many different statements about their sexual behaviors, preferences, and HIV status. The exercise proved to be a great springboard for discussion of many issues related to gay male sexuality and HIV prevention.

The daily support groups, co-facilitated by Deacon Tad Lincoln of Miami, FL and me, provided opportunity for a number of people to share frustrations, challenges, and hopes. Each day at lunchtime, the group focused on one of the steps in the UFMCC pamphlet, "So You're Going to Live: Facing Life after Facing Death." In addition to persons living with HIV, there were a number of senior lesbians and gays present dealing with health challenges of aging.

Mr. Chris Puplick spoke on "Compassion as Public Policy" at the AIDS Plenary on Thursday. Mr. Puplick is President of the Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales; Chair of the Australian National Council on AIDS and Related Diseases; and Chair of the AIDS Trust of Australia.

Also at the plenary, Rev. Elder Troy Perry graciously presented me with a plaque in recognition of my ten years of service as Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry. I will be leaving my position December 31, 1997.

After a few days off, I went to MCC Melbourne to preach and teach. This church boasts a solid core group of persons living with HIV who have been doing "Spiritual Strength for Survival Support Groups" for several years. In one workshop, we discussed starting a new support group based on "So You're Going to Live." The people of MCC Melbourne were extraordinarily generous in their hospitality, and I will long remember all the fun I had!

Classified

MCC of Greater Tulsa is seeking a vibrant, spirit-filled pastor to guide our church into the future. We are a commissioned church that has much to offer: a 23-year old UFMCC congregation, a building that is completely paid for, and an administrative body that has no outstanding debts or tithes! We offer a part-time pastorate with benefits negotiable for UFMCC credentialed clergy. We are also prepared to help with moving expenses. The past two years without a pastor have taught us to trust God more than ever. We have become a healthy church that is now ready for growth. Here is a great source of untapped potential waiting for just the right pastor. Are you the one? Interested clergy should submit a resume and recent preaching video by Oct. 1, 1997. Send to Pastoral Search, P. O. Box 581702, Tulsa, OK 74158-1702.

GREAT SAVINGS on dental, vision, & prescriptions. Community friendly. $15 monthly per household. For free information call 1-888-711-2742 PIN 0949. #AP60697A10110.

BROKERS NEEDED Full, part time. Excellent commissions & training. Own your business and help our community. Call 1-888-711-2742 PIN 0949 for free information. #AP60697A10110.

54+ member Chartered Church seeks Senior Pastor of faith. We own our sanctuary; have active children's ministry. Seek vibrant leader to take us into the next millennium. Contact MCC Amarillo at (806) 372-4557, or send e-mail to DK591@aol.com.

Classified ad rate: $15 for first 20 words, 75 cents for each additional word. Advertising Deadline: The 15th of the month prior to publication.

Keeping In Touch

The monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation. *Keeping in Touch* may be freely copied for distribution in UFMCC. Portions may be reprinted in UFMCC church publications, with attribution. For other distribution, please request permission. Subscription free upon request. Send address changes, news, and ideas to: 8704 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, California USA 90069, 310/360-8640, fax 310/360-8680 e-mail ufmcchq@aol.com
Web site http://www.ufmcc.com
Deadline for each issue is the 10th of prior month.

Editor
James N. Birkitt Jr., *Director of Communications*

Editorial Board
Rev. Elder Troy Perry, *Moderator*
Ravi Verma, *Director of Administration*

Team Members
Nancy Fackrell, Rev. Steve Pieters

Graphic Design: **NormMason***wordshapes* 213-413-6009

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

8704 Santa Monica Boulevard, Second Floor
West Hollywood, California 90069
310/360-8640 Fax 310/360-8680

Presorted
First Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
Los Angeles, CA
Permit No. 33

FIRST CLASS PRESORT

Chronicles

TOP 20 TITHES - JULY 1997

1: MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX	3,900.55
2: MCC Washington, Washington, DC	2,752.01
3: King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL	2,209.61
4: MCC San Diego, San Diego, CA	1,439.09
5: First MCC of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA	1,396.48
6: MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	1,384.50
7: Joy MCC, Orlando, Florida	1,365.16
8: MCC New York, New York City, NY	1,187.46
9: Harvest MCC, Denton, TX	1,172.52
10: Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston, TX	1,146.19
11: St. John's MCC, Raleigh, NC	1,130.90
12: Christ Covenant MCC, Decautur, GA	919.01
13: MCC Charleston, Charleston, SC	917.57
14: MCC Richmond, Richmond, VA	876.59
15: River City MCC, Sacramento, CA	825.91
16: Agape MCC, Ft. Worth, TX	768.65
17: MCC of Greater St. Louis, MO	756.75
18: Good Samaritan MCC, Whittier, CA	744.80
19: MCC Seattle, Seattle, WA	708.31
20: MCC Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, TX	681.60

[These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's monthly income that is reported to the Fellowship headquarters.]

TOP 20 PER CAPITA - JULY 1997

1: MCC Johnson County, Shawnee, KS	45.68
2: Good Samaritan MCC, Whittier, CA	43.56
3: Resurrection Beach MCC, Huntington Beach, CA	42.10
4: MCC of Grater Hayward, San Lorenzo, CA	38.59
5: Eternal Light MCC, Lacey, WA	35.73
6: Resurrection MCC, Chicago, IL	35.29
7: Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY	34.16
8: Gentle Souls MCC, Kansas City, MO	32.10
9: Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston, TX	31.75
10: MCC Family in Christ, Ft. Collins, CO	30.13
11: MCC of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA	29.08
12: Divine Peace MCC, Hazel Park, MI	28.78
13: Harvest MCC, Denton, TX	27.85
14: Spirit of Peace MCC, Prairie Grove, IL	27.73
15: Safe Harbor MCC, Memphis, TN	26.57
16: Morning Star MCC, Cherry Valley, MA	26.33
17: New Hope! MCC, Santa Rosa, CA	25.93
18: MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	24.90
19: MCC New Haven, New Haven CT	24.79
20: MCC San Jose, San Jose, CA	24.78

[These figures reflect the average individual weekly offering to the local church.]